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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Deputy 'Not U.S. Citizen'

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Ashot Yegiazaryan, a State Duma deputy who faces criminal prosecution on fraud charges, denied that he has obtained U.S. citizenship, was arrested in France and quit Orthodox Christianity, Interfax reported Monday.

Yegiazaryan said in a statement that all three stories are rumors spread by the media as part of a defamation campaign against him.

The Prosecutor General's Office has asked the Duma to strip the deputy, a Liberal Democratic Party member, of his parliamentary immunity to allow the charges against him, a request that the Duma is expected to grant Wednesday.

Yegiazaryan, whose whereabouts are unknown, reiterated in his statement his belief that the case was fabricated by business opponents.

(MT)

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